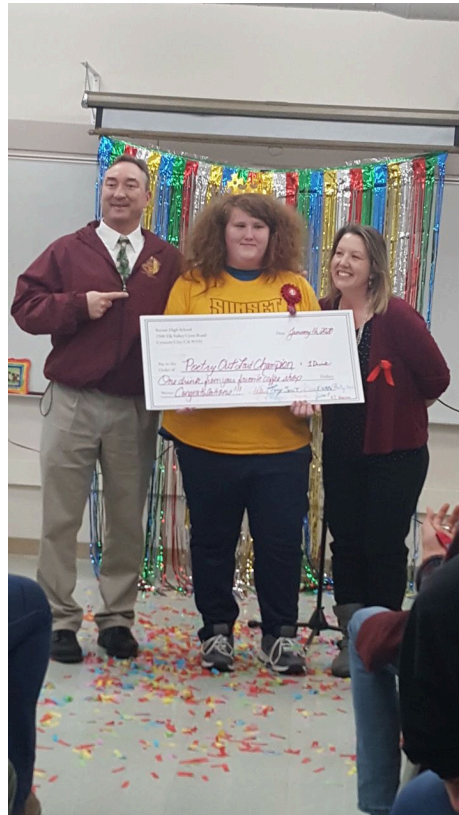


Poetry Out Loud inspires Del Norte youth

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Sunset High School students Alex Armstrong and Noah Kuntz will be traveling to Sacramento for the California Poetry Out Loud finals March 15-16. Poetry Out Loud is a national competition that encourages high school students to learn about poetry through memorization, performance, and competition. Students are challenged to study, memorize, and recite poetry from an anthology of more than 1,100 classic and contemporary poems.

Armstrong and Kuntz both progressed through classroom competition, school-wide competition, and then to Del Norte's County Competition. Now as Del Norte County's Poetry Out Loud Champion, Armstrong will compete in California's State Finals. He'll join more than fifty other county champions who will also be competing to be named California State Champion. As County runner up, Kuntz will attend the state finals for the opportunity to experience the competition at the state level, and also to step in for Armstrong should he be unable to compete.

For some students, participating in Poetry Out Loud encourages them to have increased confidence in other areas as well.

“Poetry Out Loud is an amazing program that has helped me understand that my words have power,” Armstrong explains. “It has taken me out of my comfort zone, inspired me to express myself, and reach for greater accomplishments.”

There are two rounds of competition at the state level, with students preparing three poems each. Armstrong will be reciting “In School Days” by John Greenleaf Whittier, “In Flanders Fields” by John McCrae, and “Common Dust” By Georgia Douglas Johnson.

The winner of the California Poetry Out Loud Finals will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to compete in the national finals in Washington, DC in April. The Poetry Out Loud national finals will present a total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends, including a \$20,000 award for the Poetry Out Loud National Champion.

“Del Norte County is fortunate to have teachers and volunteers dedicate time and energy to bringing Poetry Out Loud into our high school classrooms,” says Stephanie La Torre, DNACA’s Executive Director and coordinator for the program. “The goal for our third year is to have even more students participate the entire way through the program.”

This is the second year in a row that Del Norte Association for Cultural Awareness (DNACA), the California Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts have brought Poetry Out Loud to Del Norte county. Funding for the Poetry Out Loud program allows local teaching artists to hold workshops for the participating high school students, help them understand the materials, and work on the presentation of their chosen poems. The funding also helps pay for the County champion’s travel to Sacramento, and other materials related to the program.

For more information on Poetry Out Loud, visit poetryoutloud.org. To learn more about DNACA visit DNACA.net.